

**National Water Quality Program  
USGS-National Park Service Water Quality Partnership  
Call for proposals for projects initiating in FY2018**

**Key due dates for proposals:**

January 27, 2017 for short (5-page) proposals for regional evaluation

June 12, 2017 for full (expanded) proposals selected by regional evaluation

**USGS Partnership Coordinator:** Mark Nilles, [manilles@usgs.gov](mailto:manilles@usgs.gov), 303-236-1878

**NPS Partnership Coordinator:** Pete Penoyer, [pete\\_penoyer@nps.gov](mailto:pete_penoyer@nps.gov) 970-225-3535

**Partnership web site:** [http://water.usgs.gov/nps\\_partnership/](http://water.usgs.gov/nps_partnership/)

**Partnership Fact Sheet:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3133/fs20163041>

**Introduction:** This partnership employs a USGS-NPS jointly managed competition and project selection process that identifies national park science needs that will be met by USGS scientists. Key elements of the partnership are: 1) A well-publicized USGS-NPS partnership-specific call for short (5-page) proposals, 2) a regional selection process involving USGS and NPS regions with reviewers from both agencies, and 3) authors of short proposals selected to advance by regional competition submit a full proposal for evaluation by a national panel of USGS and NPS scientists. Short proposals are submitted by the USGS lead principal investigator(s) to the appropriate USGS Water Science Field Team-Water Quality Specialist, who leads the organization of joint USGS-NPS regional review panels. Regional panels evaluate the short proposals using a reduced number of ranking criteria (significance, severity, problem resolution, and scientific merit) with equal weighting. Specific proposal ranking criteria for regional evaluation are indicated on page four of this document, and a template for the 5-page proposals is provided on the partnership web site. Following regional selection, the advancing project principal investigator(s) (PIs) are requested to develop full proposals that are evaluated by a national panel of USGS and NPS representatives on an equal basis including national, regional, park, and Science Center personnel, using nine ranking criteria. While USGS and NPS Regional and HQ staff may assist in proposal preparation or recommend improvements to Principal Investigators, rejection and selection of proposals are limited to the regional and national review panels of selected USGS and NPS staff for that purpose.

**Timeline:**

**November 9, 2016**

USGS-NPS water quality partnership FY18 project call for proposals from USGS and NPS partnership coordinators goes out to all USGS areas, Science Centers, NPS regions, and parks by agency memos.

**January 27, 2017**

Due date for short (not to exceed 5 pages) proposals. Email proposals to the USGS Water Science Field Team Water Quality Specialist (Northeast, Southeast, Central or West), based on where the project will be conducted as described on page 3 of this document.

**January 30, 2017 – March 31, 2017**

Joint USGS-NPS regional panels evaluate and select proposals to forward to national panel.

**On or before April 3, 2017**

For those short proposals selected to be forwarded to national panel, USGS project PI's and benefitting parks are notified and instructed to expand proposals to meet national standards for full proposals.

**June 12, 2017**

Full proposals and approval letters are due and collected by the appropriate USGS Water Science Field Team Water Quality Specialist.

**June 19, 2017**

Completed package of full proposals are sent from the Water Science Field Team Water Quality Specialists to the NPS-WRD and USGS-NPS Partnership National Coordinators.

**June 20, 2017**

NPS-WRD and USGS-NPS Partnership coordinators commence the national panel review of proposals.

**July 27, 2017**

National panel concludes and selects projects for funding. PIs are informed of selection or non-selection for FY18 funding immediately following the end of panel (on or before July 28).

**On or before August 25, 2017**

The NPS-USGS Partnership web site is updated with FY18 selected projects.

On or before November 1, 2017

Comments from national panel reviewers are posted to the partnership web site. Memos from USGS and NPS partnership coordinators are sent with FY18 newly selected, non-selected and existing (FY16-17 start) projects and new project rankings. USGS-NPS water quality partnership FY19 call for proposals from USGS and NPS partnership coordinators goes out to all USGS regions, Science Centers, NPS regions, and parks by agency memos.

**Documentation:** USGS Science Centers must submit Adobe PDF versions of their technical proposals in order to compete for FY 2018 funding from this partnership. A template for short proposals and guidance for full proposals are available on the partnership web site. All full project proposals also require specific responses to all nine ranking criteria and written approval by both USGS Center Directors and Park Superintendents.

**Funding amount:** There is no minimum funding level. However, the three types of projects addressed by this funding source have the following maximum funding levels:

1. Intensive Studies: up to \$100,000 per year for a maximum of 3 years (\$300,000 overall).
2. Synoptic Studies: up to \$75,000 per year for a maximum of 2 years (\$150,000 overall).
3. Technical Assistance Requests: up to \$50,000 for one year.

Anticipated annual partnership funding is \$1.7M, with 1/3 of this available (on average) annually to initiate new projects.

**Project duration:** Three years for intensive studies, two years for synoptic studies and one year for technical assistance requests.

**Number of proposals selected by area/regional panels for the national panel:** Three joint agency regional panels with equal representation between USGS and NPS personnel evaluate and select a subset of short proposals for further evaluation and funding by a national panel. Each joint regional panel (East, Central, West) will select up to a total of eight proposals in the following funding range for full proposal development and submission to the national panel: four intensive study proposals up to \$100K/year over three years (\$300K total), two synoptic study proposals up to \$75K/year over two years (\$150K total), and two technical assistance proposals up to \$50K for one year. This will result in a maximum of 24 proposals (8 per region) to be considered by the national panel and provide a range of project scopes and durations.

**Subject of projects:** Projects will be accepted in the three categories below. For intensive and synoptic studies, proposals shall include a data analysis and interpretive product to make the information immediately applicable to NPS resource managers, and to provide interpretive content so that park interpreters and the USGS can present project findings to the public.

1. Intensive Studies: Relatively large projects that require in-depth study of park water quality. Designed to characterize known or suspected water quality problems, these projects will also focus on understanding causes of contamination and the implications of water quality impairment to aquatic biota. Most intensive studies are strongly issue-driven and oriented towards priority water quality issues confronting the NPS. Intensive studies will be designed to enable park managers to know the health of NPS water resources, evaluate the effects of remediation actions, and/or document whether external activities adversely affect park water quality.
2. Synoptic Studies: Shorter-term investigations of water quality. Synoptic studies are intended to provide a timely assessment of aquatic conditions at selected locations and to evaluate the spatial relationships or contributions to those conditions, and/or to provide baseline data and information where little exists. The studies document status in water quality and may determine if management actions are achieving water quality objectives. Monitoring may be implemented using a fixed station or "site rotation" concept.
3. Technical Assistance: Short-term assistance provided to the park for purposes of installation of instrumentation, training, scoping or limited synoptic water quality studies, or providing technical representation to the NPS requiring water quality expertise.

## **FY18 topics of special interest:**

The annual call for proposals periodically highlights opportunities for project development in areas of special interest to the USGS and NPS. Two such topics are identified in this FY18 call.

1. The USGS and the NPS recognize harmful algal blooms (HABs) as an important water-quality concern, and encourage proposals focused on harmful algal blooms in our national parks through the Partnership. Jennifer Graham (KS-WSC, [jlgraham@usgs.gov](mailto:jlgraham@usgs.gov), 785-832-3511) has compiled information on HABs issues and science needs in specific NPS administered lands and USGS capabilities, which are available upon request to her.
2. Parallel to this call, the National Park Service through a Request for Interest (RFI) is seeking interest and qualifications of potential investigator(s) to assist with a project to conduct additional analyses on 1500+ previously collected fish samples. Small plugs of tissue from fish collected in 2015 and 2016 from 25 eastern U.S. national parks were used in a mercury study with whole body fish remaining frozen and largely intact. This USGS-NPS Partnership program is one potential funding mechanism for USGS scientists to consider, if interested in proposing additional contaminant (or other) studies on these preserved, whole body fish carcasses. See <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1439/news.htm> for the RFI and metadata summary of fish collected to date. Responses to the RFI are due to the NPS on December 15, 2016. NPS will notify select researchers on January 4, 2017 to develop proposals to meet this year's USGS-NPS Partnership program's short proposal deadline of January 27, 2017. For further information or questions, please contact the NPS project managers Colleen Flanagan Pritz ([colleen\\_flanagan\\_pritz@nps.gov](mailto:colleen_flanagan_pritz@nps.gov), 303-969-2806) and Kerensa King ([kerensa\\_king@nps.gov](mailto:kerensa_king@nps.gov), 970-267-7229).

**USGS-NPS coordination:** Early in the process of assembling short proposals for regional submission, parks and Science Centers should communicate to identify park needs, USGS expertise, discuss strategies, and coordinate writing or revising project proposals and addressing the ranking criteria. Both a USGS and National Park Service partner are required, and one or more USGS professionals collaborate with the benefiting park to prepare a short proposal (5 page maximum) for the project. The USGS collaborators, cooperating Science Centers, and benefiting park(s) do not necessarily have to be within the same USGS or NPS region.

In order for a full proposal to be considered by the national panel, the USGS Science Center Director(s) that is partnering with the park must certify each submission with an approval letter, indicating the work is feasible and the schedule and costs are appropriate. In addition, the local NPS Park Superintendent(s) must certify each submission with an approval letter, indicating that the park approves the project work and is committed to be involved in the project during its implementation. These letters should be appended to the full PDF proposal so one PDF file for each project contains the full proposal, specific responses to the nine ranking criteria and the approval letters. Project funds will be allocated by the USGS National Water Quality Program to the USGS Science Center performing the investigations. Parks will collaborate with the USGS offices that will conduct the water quality assessments and studies necessary to satisfy park needs.

**Proposal submission points of contact and regional reviews:** NPS and USGS personnel will evaluate the short project proposals utilizing a project selection process stated in the introduction of this guidance, with equal representation between NPS and USGS reviewers on the panels. USGS Field Team Water Quality Specialists will communicate with NPS Regional Water Resource Coordinators in developing the regional panels. Both short and full proposals for projects should be sent to the following USGS Water Quality Specialists on the basis of where the project work will be conducted. For multi-state projects, select the specialist on the basis of where the majority of project work will be performed.

Northeast: Callie Oblinger, [oblinger@usgs.gov](mailto:oblinger@usgs.gov), 703-648-5803  
States: CT DC DE IL IN KY MA MD ME MI NH NJ NY OH PA RI VA VT WI WV

Southeast: Lisa Olsen, [ldolsen@usgs.gov](mailto:ldolsen@usgs.gov), 703-648-5809  
States and territories: AL AR FL GA LA MS NC PR SC TN VI

Central: Tim Oden, [toden@usgs.gov](mailto:toden@usgs.gov), 303-236-1470  
States: AZ CO KS ND NE MN MO IA NM OK SD TX UT

West: Michael Rosen, [mrosen@usgs.gov](mailto:mrosen@usgs.gov), 775-887-7683  
States and territories: AK CA HI ID MT NV OR WA WY, Pacific Island Territories

**Short Proposal ranking criteria for the regional evaluation:** A template for five-page short proposals incorporating the following criteria is available at [http://water.usgs.gov/nps\\_partnership/admin.php](http://water.usgs.gov/nps_partnership/admin.php)

1. Significance of the resource or issue to the park: Describe why this is an important issue or resource to the park involved. What was the process that identified this as a priority?
2. Severity of resource threat, problem, or need(s): Is there a time-critical or urgent aspect to this project? What causes this to be an urgent need? How imminent is the threat, and what is its extent? What are the consequences of not doing the project now?
3. Scientific merit: The project should have clearly stated objectives, well designed procedures, adhere to the scientific method, contribute to key science questions, and have realistically attainable results. Proposals should describe any new or innovative scientific approaches or techniques.
4. Problem resolution: Describe how the proposed project will resolve the problem, as defined in the proposal. Will the project contribute directly to decisions or actions that will meaningfully resolve a management issue?

**Full proposal submission package:** USGS Water Science Field Team Water Quality Specialists are responsible for providing the following documents electronically to Pete Penoyer NPS-WRD and Mark Nilles USGS-OWQ on or before June 19, 2017: 1) Full Technical Proposals 2) Responses to all [nine ranking criteria](#) and 3) approval letters. These sections should be appended in this order resulting in one PDF document per each proposal package.

**Implementation plan and reporting requirements:** Brief annual progress reports and a final completion report are required from USGS for all projects funded with these funds. Detailed implementation plans are not required from parks.

**Proposal preparation and technical assistance:** Guidance is available from the USGS and NPS-WRD regarding the suitability of project concepts for submission, preparing the overall project proposal submissions, and facilitating coordination with project partners. To obtain assistance or information please contact Mark Nilles, USGS, National Water Quality Program ([manilles@usgs.gov](mailto:manilles@usgs.gov), 303-236-1878) or your Water Science Field Team Water Quality Specialist. For National Park Service specific information, you may also contact Pete Penoyer, NPS-WRD, ([pete\\_penoyer@nps.gov](mailto:pete_penoyer@nps.gov), 970-225-3535). For more information, see the partnership web site at [http://water.usgs.gov/nps\\_partnership/](http://water.usgs.gov/nps_partnership/).